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Black Mixed-race Male Experiences of the UK Secondary School Curriculum

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Drawing on findings from 20 semi-structured interviews carried out in 2013, this article seeks to contribute to the limited body of literature exploring the schooling experiences of the mixed-race population in the United Kingdom. Taking a particular focus on the secondary school curriculum, the article provides examples in which Black mixed-race males identify as Black and as mixed-race, interchangeably and simultaneously. Therefore, the article suggests that if we are to fully understand the experiences of Black mixed-race males, the development of a new conceptual framework that acknowledges the coalescence of Blackness and mixedness is necessary. Although the focus remains on Black mixed-race male pupils, the analysis may raise new questions for the way we view mixed-race populations.

Keywords: *mixed-race, Britain, curriculum, race, attainment, Black*

INTRODUCTION

The 2001 United Kingdom (UK) Census found that the mixed-race population constitutes the fastest growing group of children and young people in the UK (Morley & Street, 2014). Those racialized as ‘mixed’ have garnered a proliferation of interest that has transcended academia, the media, and politics (Song, 2014). This has contributed to the increased awareness of the specific and unique experiences of those racialized as mixed (Platt, 2012). Research from Bradford (2006) and Platt (2012) has highlighted a number of unique disadvantages facing mixed-race populations in multifarious social institutions. These disadvantages include, but are not limited to schooling (Joseph-Salisbury, 2016a), the care system, employment, and mental health provisions (Morley & Street, 2014).

Despite this sudden interest, it is apparent that in comparison to mono-racial groups, relatively little is known about mixed-race populations across the globe (Aspinall & Song, 2013; Morning, 2012). This is perhaps partially attributable to census recognition being a relatively recent historical development in many countries, including the UK. By introducing new data from the UK, and focusing specifically on males of mixed Black and White parentage (Black mixed-race males), this article seeks to make a contribution to what, head teacher and researcher, Denise Williams (2011) describes as, “a dearth of literature about the schooling experiences of mixed-race pupils in British schools” (p. 1).

School census data, from the UK Department for Education (DfE; 2014), has highlighted the Black mixed-race male group as underachieving at the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) level. While this has been recognized by government initiatives (Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), 2005; Department for Education and Skills, 2003) significant interventions are yet to be made (Caballero, Haynes, & Tikly, 2007). Black mixed-race males also experience higher levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusions (or expulsion and suspension, respectively) than both the ‘all pupil’ and all ‘ethnic minority’ average. Significantly, these exclusions occur at a similar rate to those of their Black male counterparts. In the year 2011 through 2012, 0.36% of the White and Black Caribbean male pupil population were excluded permanently, this compared to 0.38% of the Black Caribbean male population. In the same year, for the White and Black African males, 0.19% compared to 0.13% of Black African males (DfE, 2013). The Race Relations Amendment Act of 2000 makes race equality a statutory duty and thus, provides rationale for intervention (Parsons, 2004). While broader studies of mixedness have considered schooling as one of a number of foci (e.g., Tizard & Phoenix, 2002), and broader educational studies have considered the mixed population as one of several minoritized groups (Department for Education and Skills, 2003), very little specific and substantive research has been conducted regarding the reasons for the

underachievement of this specific population (Caballero, Hayes, & Tikly, 2007). It is for these reasons a primary objective of the current research is to explore perceptions of the school curriculum in the UK with specifically Black mixed-race male students. As will become apparent throughout this article, the descriptor Black mixed-race is used to reflect the ways in which the research participants made sense of their own identities and the limited identity options they recognized (Aspinall & Song, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

By using Critical Race Theory (CRT), this research centralizes too often marginalized voices. To do this the research draws upon data from twenty semi-structured interviews with Black mixed-race males. The researcher's own positionality as a self-identified Black mixed-race man was of fundamental importance to the emancipatory nature of this design and it is conceivable, as several participants remarked, that a shared racial identity might have facilitated open discussion.

Participants in the interviews were between the ages 18 and 27 and responded to posters, online forum postings, and word of mouth. They spoke in their position as former (State) secondary school pupils and came from a variety of social, economic, and familial backgrounds, from across the UK. While a sample of this size cannot hope to be wholly representative, the vast heterogeneity in the sample offers a reflection of the diversity of the Black mixed-race group in the UK.

The interview design was informed by a "critical race-grounded methodology process" (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). Although participants were aware of the focus on race, they were encouraged to lead the direction of the interview. The respondents gave accounts of their own schooling experiences offering insight and opinions on how experiences may be improved. From these interviews two key themes emerged as potential sites for intervention; the role of

school teachers (see: Joseph-Salisbury, 2016a), and the role of the school curriculum. The latter is the focus of this article.

The analysis is also informed by a CRT framework that holds that society is fundamentally stratified along racial lines (Hylton, 2012). This framework has been of great use to education researchers seeking to pinpoint the impact of race on experiences and attainment (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009; Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). However, little research has considered how race impacts the schooling experiences of the Black mixed-race population. Interviews were analyzed and coded using NVIVO software (Nvivo, 2012), and, as reflected in the form of this article, the interviews were coded in terms of experiences, criticisms, and potential interventions.

This article positions primary research data alongside existing literature, particularly the few substantive pieces already conducted on Black-mixed race schooling experiences in Britain (Joseph-Salisbury, 2016; Tikly et al., 2004; Williams, 2011). Recognizing that improved experiences and improved attainment are inextricably linked (Tikly et al., 2004), the article highlights curricula issues that face racially minoritized students generally, but also offers new and specific insight into the schooling experiences of Black mixed-race men. In so doing, the article demonstrates the need to move beyond current understandings that fail to recognize the fluidity and concomitance of Blackness and mixedness, in order to conceptualize the Black mixed-race male.

Conceptualizing the Black Mixed-race Male

This article contends that scholarly and political debates thus far have stalled at a paradox. Where scholars have emphasized the commonalities with Black male experiences, this has rendered invisible the unique and specific aspects of mixedness. Emphases on commonalities with Blackness are prevalent in ‘Black power’ literature and predicated on the belief that

mixed-race individuals are racialized by others as Black, both socially and politically (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002). In more contemporary historical moments, precipitated by a growing body of literature and changes in racial demographics, there has emerged increasing evidence of mixed-race individuals identifying, and being racialized as mixed. Subsequently scholars have responded to emphasize the particularities of mixed-race experiences. Inadvertently however, for this particular population, this has downplayed the convergence with, and impact of, Blackness upon experiences. This is critical as there is still recognition of Black mixed-race men being attributed Black masculinity (Joseph-Salisbury, 2016b) and despite recognizing their mixedness, participants in this research felt that they were still often racialized as Black.

By highlighting participants' experiences of Blackness and mixedness, often simultaneously, this article argues that scholars need to move beyond this juncture and develop a more nuanced conceptual framework to consider the experiences of this population. Acknowledgment of commonalities allows policymakers to build on the robust body of literature that has focused on Black male experiences. Simultaneously, it is imperative that scholars continue to illuminate particularities of mixedness in order to avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' imposition of Blackness. In order to incorporate this growing segment of the population, understandings of Blackness may need to be expanded to reflect the growing heterogeneity and diversity among those identifying with Blackness. Greater recognition of the multiplicity of identities, as encapsulated by 'Black mixed-race male' can advance the understanding of the schooling experiences of this population. Indeed, this descriptor encompassing both Blackness and mixedness is emblematic of the nuanced stance that is necessary to reflect the coalescence of mixedness and Blackness in the complex racialization of Black mixed-race men.

The Curriculum

The central importance of the curriculum for the schooling experiences of racially minoritized students has been well-documented in academic research (see Asante 1991; ATL, 2005;

Graham & Tytler, 1993; Tomlinson, 1993) and has long been cited by activists as a place for intervention (i.e., North London West Indian Association, 1969). Blair and colleagues (1998) conducted research into the levels of attainment of multi-ethnic schools and attributed the success of the high-achieving schools to the curricular recognition of a variety of pupil identities.

Through the interviews conducted in this study, as well as a review of existing literature, it became clear that the school curriculum similarly plays an integral role in the experiences of Black mixed-race males. Tikly and associates (2004) suggest that educational barriers “operate in a context where mixed heritage identities . . . are not recognized in the curriculum” (p. 6; also see, Caballero, Haynes, & Tikly, 2007). This claim is consistent with the findings of this research. Symptomatically, the curriculum was highlighted as a primary site for intervention in raising the attainment of Black mixed-race males. In this section one sees how perceptions of the curriculum simultaneously place emphasis on both Blackness and mixedness. Research participant Taylor, who went to school in Birmingham shared his views on the school curriculum:

I think if things are going to change the curriculum should be the starting point. It’s so central to everything and it’s so bad, so white, that’s where I’d start.

In this excerpt one notes the commonalities with the experiences of racially minoritized students, for whom a lack of curricular representation has long been cited as a barrier (Mac an Ghaill, 1988). Taylor does not make specific reference to Black mixed-race experiences but rather discusses the problem of White supremacy in the curriculum as a racially minoritized student; this is a recurrent theme in respondent insights. While also discussing White supremacy, Jamie, schooled in Manchester, does specifically acknowledge mixedness:

If people want racial equality, everyone to have equal chances, then there has to be a drive to represent all minority groups in the curriculum and mixed-race people need to be a part of that. If the curriculum is just

designed for White people and to include White people then it is going to advantage White people. I mean what do people expect? They'll get the best grades and the best jobs. It links to life chances you know? That's why it's important.

Similarly to Taylor, although somewhat more explicitly, Jamie highlights the commonalities with other non-White groups but is also cautious to note that “mixed-race people” must be a part of this. This need for mixed-race inclusion is important as respondents felt that Black movements had previously failed to account for the specific aspects of mixed-race experiences. As Jamie demonstrates, inasmuch as participants supported Black struggles for representation they felt it important that mixed-race concerns were not entirely subsumed and rendered invisible. Participant Craig, who went to school in Liverpool, specifically highlighted the need for the inclusion of mixed identities:

That'd help the mixed kids be interested, if they are part of the curriculum, if they saw their identities in there. Not everyone but overall, as a group, they'd do better that way and yeah some might get that from a curriculum targeted at Black kids, but why not include mixed-race stuff too? Cover everyone; people see themselves in different ways.

As will be suggested throughout this article, these identities need to be reconceptualized to account for the complexity of the racialization of Black mixed-race males. While the issues discussed by Taylor and Jamie are consistent with those of Black males, one can simultaneously see specific reference to mixedness from Craig and a need to include both Black and mixed-race identities. If advances are to be made, both must be acknowledged. As Craig notes, “While interventions targeting the Black population may be sufficient, this is ideally supplemented by an awareness of mixedness.” To put it another way, the inclusion of Blackness should not bring about the erasure of mixedness. The participants can be at once, Black and mixed. Craig's account makes apparent the inextricable links between positive identity formation and educational attainment. The curricular erasure of racially minoritized populations acts to further entrench and reinforce racial disparities that leave certain groups,

including Black and Black mixed-race males, continually disadvantaged and marginalized from the White hegemonic curriculum. Positive identity formation, precipitated by a challenge to the Eurocentric White supremacist curriculum, may offer an intervention to break down barriers to achievement for this group (ATL, 2005). Participants felt that ultimately the MacPherson report recommendation that “consideration be given to amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order to better reflect the needs of a diverse society” (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 1999; Macpherson, 1999), had not been met.

Lloyd, a participant who attended a predominantly White school in a rural area and went on to study at university, recognized the widespread fundamental bias inherent in the curriculum. He spoke of biases in English and science, before focusing particularly on math:

The fundamentals of math actually developed from Arabia, from Asia, not from England, it wasn't Caucasian based, they didn't just make everything themselves actually there was a history and it came from the Middle East. They talk a lot of the mathematical equations and formulas, all of that mathematical foundation, it came from the Middle East and that's not shown in the education system that yeah, math is fantastic and it's a universal language. . . the fact that the number naught was created by an Indian, you know, how many children actually know that? Is it important for them to know that? Yes because it means mathematics becomes culturally diverse, it's not just something that was created by Jesus Christ or something, you know what I mean?

What Lloyd argues then is that a better understanding of the underpinnings of mathematics could help to destabilize the White supremacy that characterizes the school curriculum. Despite the awareness of racial bias that instilled a sense of outsider status in Lloyd, and others, it was in discussion of history lessons that participants were most critical; history lessons were seen as the place where ethnocentrism manifested themselves most overtly and therefore the majority of discussion in this article focuses on the history curriculum (Joseph-Salisbury, 2015).

Taught by White teachers in what he described as a “predominantly Black, working-class, inner-city school,” Kane remarked:

... history, I think that’s bollocks anyway. Obviously history is written by the winners of war, so they aren’t going to tell you anything bad that they’ve done, you don’t get the full story.

Here one sees an overt recognition of the ethnocentric nature of the curriculum. It might also be observed that Kane’s feelings can be understood to be consistent with the general experience of racially minoritized students (Doharty, 2015). This experience of being rendered outside of the White hegemony makes it difficult for Kane to engage with the curriculum and thus, schooling. Kane discussed his feeling of alienation, being patronized and being taught history by a White teacher he considered to be biased (Joseph-Salisbury, 2016a). Ultimately, like the Black males in a study conducted by Mac an Ghaill (1988), Kane disengaged from schooling. Kane’s positioning of himself alongside his Black (or non-White) peers and within Blackness demonstrates the importance of upholding the commonalities with Blackness and therefore, the need to emphasize the Black in Black mixed-race. We see the commonality of mixed and Black experiences again in an extract from a respondent in Williams’ (2011) research:

Everything we do is Europe, Europe, Europe and any time Black people are mentioned it’s degrading—it’s like Europe is the centre of the universe or something. It’s [the curriculum] so ... white! (p. 120)

This respondent quickly conflates her curricular recognition as part of that of “Black people”, once more highlighting the commonalities in disadvantages that are faced. This awareness of a White-bias resonates with assertions of Black activist writer and poet Benjamin Zephaniah (2003: no pagination):

... my British education led me to believe that the history of Black people started with slavery and that we were born slaves, and should therefore be grateful that we were given freedom by our caring masters. It is because of this idea of empire that black people like myself don’t even know our true historical culture.

This is somewhat reminiscent of the famous words of Malcolm X when he argued, “our history did not begin in chains and it will not end in chains” (*Ebony Man*, 1985, p. 3). Similarly to respondents in this research, Tikly and others (2004) and Williams (2011) both found that respondents placed huge importance on Black history. The perception that they were only getting “half of the story” caused serious contention. Joe, among others, shared the sentiments of Malcolm X and Zephaniah, “there is nothing about how the British Empire really came up. It’s as if the only thing it ever did was abolish slavery.” In the noteworthy parallels between the extracts from Malcolm X, Zephaniah, and from participant Joe there is the commonality between Black and Black mixed-race experiences and thus, further evidence for the need to place emphasis on the shared experiences of the two. These utterances from Zephaniah, and from Joe reveal how the inability of mainstream schooling to provide role models, or any Black history other than the ethnocentrically taught abolition of slavery, can lead to the state described by participant Theo, who went to a predominantly White school in Leeds:

...if there are no Black or mixed role models then it sends the wrong message, it tells us that we aren’t good enough, maybe more importantly that we won’t be good enough.

Emphasizing the need for recognition of his Blackness and his mixedness, this excerpt resonates closely with what Malcolm X (1964) had described as, an “inferiority complex that . . . is instilled through mainstream education” (see also, Dei & Simmons 2010; Fanon 1986). This has been recognized as a feature of mixedness in various contexts (Nehaul, 1996; Pattynama, 2012). This subordinate positioning of Black and Black mixed-race identities creates a barrier in the creation of positive and stable identities (Tikly et al., 2004). As Wilkinson (2013), the director of curriculum of cohesion suggested, “To help to restore balance to the situation, we simply need to teach a broader, more accurate history that places essential national events in their true historical context” (no pagination). Children’s Laureate Malorie Blackman (2013; no pagination) talks of the disengagement such curricular bias can lead to:

I do feel it's very dangerous to make it seem that history is the province of a certain segment of society. History should belong to all of us and it needs to include people from different cultural backgrounds. Otherwise it risks becoming irrelevant to children who could then become disenchanted with education.

In hearing such widespread dissatisfaction, the words of teacher Katherine Edwards (2013; no pagination) seem especially pertinent: “there can be few academic subjects which have greater potential both for advancing and for hindering the cause of equality through education than history.” Of course notions of an ethnocentric curriculum are nothing new (Coulby, 1995, 1997; Partington, 1985) but it is perhaps the longevity, amidst incessant political imperatives that highlight and problematize the lack of progress (Macpherson, 1999; The Swann Report, 1985). The dissatisfaction with the history curriculum symptomatically made it the most apparent place for intervention.

Throughout this section one sees how participants consider themselves outside of White hegemonic schooling. Participants see this as an issue for Black students and other racially minoritized students, with whom they often identify, but also an issue that needs to take account of the specific positionalities of mixed-race students. Importantly, if they are to resist the erasure of the totality of Black mixed-race male identities, interventions to improve the experiences—and subsequently raise the attainment of Black mixed-race males—must simultaneously target Blackness and mixedness. Furthermore, an emphasis on one must not result in an underemphasis on the other. This point is crucial. A broader diversification to represent all racially minoritized students is desirable, but must not, as previous interventions have, subsume mixedness (Tikly et al., 2004). So how might educators respond?

Curricular Interventions

When asked how the curriculum could be improved, a number of participants felt that Black representation would provide a more inclusive curriculum, rationalizing that they have a “White parent and a Black parent” so the reflection of both would prove advantageous. This is

consistent with findings from Tikly and colleagues (2004) who—while reporting that inclusion in policies targeting Black males often proved advantageous—felt that recognition of mixed-race identities would be further advantageous (see Joseph-Salisbury, 2016a; Joseph-Salisbury and Andrews, 2017). Other participants called for the representation of mixed-race role models. It is here that one sees the intricate positioning of mixedness as both, convergent and divergent, with Blackness. Participants felt that famous and influential Black mixed-race male figures such as Malcolm X, Bob Marley, Barack Obama, Frantz Fanon and W.E.B. Du Bois provided clear opportunities for representation through role models that simultaneously offer a presence for Black mixed-race males and Black males (also see Tikly et al., 2004). A research participant in Williams’ (2011) research made this point:

We talked about different people at school like Martin Luther King, Mary Seacole and Bob Marley, but I didn’t find out until I left school that Mary Seacole and Bob Marley were actually half-white. I think that’s important to know, because when famous people like that have exactly the same experiences as you, you can identify better with them and it helps you feel better about yourself. The black role models were good, but I would have seen more mixed ones, or at least have known that the ones we were talking about were mixed anyway (p. 99).

The need for the multicuity of Black mixedness to be recognized is apparent in this quotation. Research participant Ben who went to a school he described as, “predominantly White with a few Black and mixed kids,” shared a similar view:

We have to know about more famous mixed-race people, I’m only finding out about a lot of them now. It would have helped me and others to know mixed people have made it. The one for me really has to be Malcolm X, he’s always been seen as Black and I know his politics, he’s very pro-Black but he’s still mixed. I’m pro-black and mixed too. There’s room to discuss that you know?

Both these excerpts highlight the vast interconnectedness between mixedness and Blackness but importantly highlight a need to unpick the differences. As Williams (2011) notes, when Black mixed-race role models are introduced they are often depicted solely as Black, “the issue

of being mixed-race was never raised” (p. 31) thus, Black representation becomes mixed erasure. As seen in these excerpts and as was evident from other responses, there are historical figures that can facilitate discussions around mixedness and Blackness and considerations of the multiplicity of Black mixed identities (ATL, 2005). For Black mixed-race men it is imperative that these discussions are had. The heterogeneity of the mixed group has been widely noted (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002) and while there may be fixed categories for enumeration purposes, these arbitrary categories cannot hope to fully capture lived experiences. In facilitating these discussions and in order to avoid ascribing identities, practitioners might look to a Freirean model of dialogue that would allow students to discuss racial identities in a mutually supportive environment (Freire, 1996).

Alongside awareness of the potential for curricular interventions to raise attainment, participants recognized the interlinked potential for the curriculum to instil cultural awareness and dismantle racial inequality. This has long been cited as an advantage of a more diverse curriculum. Bernard Coard (1971) suggested a more diverse curriculum would be for the “benefit of the Black and white children” (also see, Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Runnymede Trust, 1998). Asante (1991) has noted the importance of the curriculum suggesting that more racially representative curricula would bring about national change. Carl, educated in an ethnically mixed London school, speaks on this point:

I think more Black history for everyone, more education for everyone, not only for the Black kids themselves but for the mixed-race children, for the teachers and for the other kids so it’s integrating everyone together.

For Carl then, Black history can have a positive impact for the “mixed-race children” and for the school at large. This idea is further supported by participant Lloyd who called for a certain degree of school-level curricular autonomy alongside a basic level of mandatory diversity in the curriculum:

I think schools should reflect their specific population, so if it's a school with a lot of Black kids, reflect that. If it's a school with a lot of Asian kids, adapt to reflect that too, same for mixed-race. Having said that, I think all schools should have a base level of cultural awareness, so even if it's a school that's one hundred percent White, they should still cover a little about other cultures.

Lloyd felt that this would help to create a more racially tolerant society. We should note that the ethnocentricity highlighted in the curriculum is not confined within the parameters of schooling. Schooling acts as a microcosm for society and such ethnocentricities are a long-standing, deeply entrenched feature of Western society at-large (Fanon, 1986; Hughes, 1961; Said, 2003; Sue, 2004). One should be aware that it is because of this society in which White educators and policymakers are socialized (and educated) that change is so difficult (Boutte & Jackson, 2014; Picower, 2009). It is hoped that an intervention in schooling experiences may transcend wider society, thus school curricula may need to go beyond diversity, to engage in anti-racist work (Asante, 1991).

Additionally participants called for a more diverse curriculum in order to spark the interests of students. As Carl suggests, feelings of irrelevance and disengagement were evident throughout,

. . . what benefit is it to my kids growing up learning about Henry the eighth and his six wives?! You know what I mean? That doesn't relate to them you know, that doesn't relate to any kids in the school you know.

Such views exemplify the feelings of alienation felt by Black mixed-race male students and have been reiterated by Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman, who in Jacobson (2013) noted, "I understand you need to learn about Henry VIII but when I was young I wanted to learn about something that felt more relevant" (no pagination). This (ir)relevancy, to which both Carl and Blackman refer, simultaneously fails to engage the majority of all students and acts to further alienate non-White students. Another participant Leroy, schooled in a rural White area, remarked: "I'm sure the civil rights movement is far more interesting and relevant than Ancient

Egypt and all the rest that they teach.” Perhaps Leroy refers to the distorted and inaccurate teaching of Ancient Egyptians as White. Even when there is opportunity to integrate Black history into the teaching of such subjects the opportunity is not utilized. Despite historians like Onyeka (2013) providing evidence of Africans in Tudor times, we still see this glaring omission from the teaching of Tudor history (Mason, 2014).

Black-mixed-race male rapper, political activist and commentator Akala talks of the disenchantment he felt toward a White Euro-ethnocentric curriculum that valued only certain types of “knowledge” and “intellect,”: “if you saw me aged 9, reading Malcolm just fine, teachers still treated me stupid” (Akala, 2011). Akala feels that, despite his ability to read, his racial identity, and his choice of reading material, resulted in him being treated as “stupid”: he possessed the wrong cultural capital. As discussed later, pupils and communities often work against White hegemonies to maintain the importance of their culture, in many cases, although not always, this can lead to disengagement with mainstream schooling (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Sewell, 1997). Akala also goes on to raise another important issue that is the lack of available inclusive, multicultural resources.

The lack of racially appropriate resources was highlighted by Tikly and others, in 2004 (see also Blackman, 2013; Williams, 2011) when they recommended that schools and authorities

work in partnership with appropriate mixed heritage and Black organisations as well as with organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality and the Runnymede trust, to develop appropriate resources for use at all levels of the education system. (p. 78)

This recommendation was still unmet although it is one that all participants fully supported:

. . . if all the books and resources are about White kids then what is going to happen? It needs to be diverse all through, and it needs to be mandatory for schools to have diverse stuff to reflect students. (Theo)

It was also noted by Wayne, schooled in a predominantly White working-class school in Manchester, that diversification of resources should be implemented at policy level rather than being the responsibility of individual teachers:

. . . thing is though with stuff like this, schools will just get one book in that's got a Black kid in it, they won't use it but that'll shut up the Asian people, the mixed-race people, everyone. They just wanna shut the ethnic minority people up . . . these things got to be done properly. Can't play at it, can't pretend. Kids know. They ain't stupid. Have to introduce more books, and make sure schools use them. If you just leave it up to some White teachers, they'll just leave it, I guess you have to force these changes through.

Wayne and others recognize the problems as institutional, and therefore, call for institutional interventions. A wholesale reconsideration of the curriculum, including resources, should strive for a state in which “staff should be confident of no contradiction between striving for high standards and striving to teach a multicultural curriculum” (ATL, 2005, p. 28). This is consistent with the CRT concept of interest convergence in which, for socio-political change, the interests of racialized minorities (curricula representation) must converge with the interests of those in power—in this case, raising attainment (Milner, 2008). Disrupting the White hegemony of the curriculum would not be a tokenistic gesture that deviates from the mainstream curriculum, but an integral inclusion. While scholars have long since noted that curricular change alone cannot offer a holistic response to myriad disadvantages facing minority groups (Carby, 1982; John, 2006), at the very least, these interventions do offer a step in the right direction. However, despite a mainstream schooling system that actively and repeatedly fails them; Black mixed-race male participants were far from passive victims.

Responses to Dissatisfaction: Finding the Other “Half of the Story”

Marcus Garvey is noted as saying, “there shall be no solution to this race problem until you, yourselves, strike the blow for liberty” (Appiah & Gates, 2005, p. 768). Indeed, participants seemed to acknowledge that British society, and schooling, was systematically racist.

Participants felt that along with continual agitation against the White state, the Black community of which they were a part could and would help itself:

Well to be honest I don't think the white government, particularly this [Conservative-Liberal democrat coalition] one we have at the moment are going to rush to help us, so we have to help ourselves. (Luke).

As exemplified by Luke (who attended a rural, predominantly White school), Black mixed-race males and their families and communities, seemed to heed the words of Garvey and become active actors in their schooling. One can see that the solidarity among the larger Black community is an important factor in agitating against the state. A number of participants sought alternative and more informal schooling from outside of the institution:

. . . the stuff I've been interested to learn has been through speaking to friends and their families and through coming to university.

Jack's position is one of particular privilege (Jack, attended a mixed school in London). Not all Black mixed-race males have overcome the barriers faced in the schooling system to reach university (Boliver, 2013). Furthermore, in universities there is recognition of widespread and myriad forms of disproportionality, institutional-racism, ethnocentrism and White bias (Alexander & Arday, 2015; Gunaratnam, 2014; Turney, Law, & Phillips, 2002).

Mainstream schooling, for the Black mixed-race male respondents, was supplemented by a variety of ad-hoc, informal, self- and community-led schooling systems. In place since the 1950s, supplementary education systems were set up *by and for* Black communities to counter the shortcomings of mainstream schooling (Andrews, 2013; Mirza & Reay, 2000) and provide a "context in which whiteness is displaced as central" (Mirza & Reay, p. 522). The persistent presence of these institutions acts to problematize misplaced notions of anti-education attitudes in Black communities (Gerrard, 2013; Sewell, 1997; Warmington, 2012, 2014). The commonalities are seen between Black mixed-race males and Black males since both groups attend these institutions often known colloquially as 'Black Saturday schools.' A number of

theorists have argued that these supplementary schools were used, particularly for mixed families, to instill a positive sense of identity not offered by the mainstream system (Caballero & Edwards, 2010; Tizard & Phoenix, 2002; Twine, 2004). Carl recalls his attendance at a Black Saturday school,

My mum sent me to the local Saturday school at the West Indian centre, that's where I really got interested. Passionate, inspiring people interested in me, not only that, but they were like me, taught about people like me, and the class was full of people like me.

Zephaniah (2003) recognized similar favor of the supplementary movement, “We get kids that are playing truant in the week, still going to classes on a Saturday to learn the real history (no pagination).” The schools offer a response to what one participant, Ishmael, described as a situation in which he felt he was only “getting half the story.” Therefore, the supplementary school offers a site for the other half of the story to be told, “that’s why all over Britain in our communities we have classes in people’s front rooms and community centres teaching us the real Black history;” a history that is not presented through a lens of Eurocentricity (Zephaniah cited by Richardson, 2012: no pagination). It is the contention of this article that a continued fragmentation of Black and Black mixed experiences could lead to the gradual erosion of the value of Black supplementary schools, and such community-based grassroots movements. Such institutions offer lots to Black mixed-race males (Joseph-Salisbury & Andrews, 2017). The majority of participants felt that they find their “own roots” in Blackness, and theorists such as Small (2002) have highlighted the closely interlinked histories of mixedness and Blackness throughout slavery. Therefore, rather than a dismantling of the important work that is being done by activists throughout the UK, a reframing of Blackness to acknowledge the importance of unique aspects of mixedness would prove far more progressive:

I went to a local Black school movement, every weekend I went. It gave me a lot and I’d highly recommend these kinds of projects. My only criticism was that it could have done a little more to recognize that some of

us, I mean quite a lot of us, had a White parent. I don't think that would have broken up the group or taken away solidarity, I mean I still say I'm Black. (Jamal)

On this, mixed-race theorists, activists, and communities can work closely with the Black community to ensure that change happens. Participants frequently cited the history of the African diaspora, Black migration and Black political movements as areas pertaining to their “roots.” As mentioned earlier, Small (2002) has highlighted the presence of mixed-race populations throughout Black history; a more expansive understanding of Blackness is not only possible, but necessary. Importantly, one area cited was the history of interracial unions; it was felt that (supplementary) educators could use this to pay some attention to the unique aspects of mixedness. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2005) suggested that mainstream educators should make efforts to improve dialogue and engage with the works of supplementary schools. Supplementary schools represent a radical, subversive, and autonomous social movement (Mirza & Reay, 2000); a movement that must not suffer from the fragmentation of mixed and Black groups while simultaneously acknowledging mixedness. Important lessons for mainstream schooling may be gleaned by looking to supplementary schools for guidance (Andrews, 2013).

While the majority of participants held that agitation against state schooling, alongside supplementary movements, was the best way forward, two of the twenty participants argued further. Similar dissatisfactions were expressed but a lack of faith in the system prompted a more radical response from these respondents. Tyrone spoke both as a pupil and as a former educator. He felt that due to the inadequacy of the current schooling system home education would be the best option for his prospective child:

Yeah, home education. I would like to do that, to school my kids myself because education isn't for everyone; it's a White, middle class institution and . . . the lack of culture and Black history.

Tyrone's partner Maria, also Black mixed-race, was present at the interview. Maria shared his criticisms:

. . . the state doesn't reflect who I am, so why would you let them educate the next generation? Why would you let them educate our kids?

Again, this resonates closely with the rhetoric of Malcolm X noted to say, "Only a fool would let his enemy teach his children" (O'Shea, 2011, p. 185). Tyrone continued, "If there were Black schools with Black curriculums and Black teachers then my kid would be going to those schools but if not, home schooling is the only option." The absolute conflation of mixed and Black experiences by Tyrone and Maria is revealed, when pressed they felt that as long as there was awareness within Black communities, the specific needs of Black mixed-race pupils could be met. The thoughts on Black schools were supported by another participant, Jake, who said, "as long as Black schools would take in to account the needs of mixed kids, then yeah, I think that's the future for us. Mainstream isn't working." While responses and proposed interventions were varied among participants, the underlying dissatisfaction with the current curriculum was unanimous.

CONCLUSIONS

Schooling is a key tool in combating the racial disparities in contemporary Britain. This article has focused on the curricular exclusion faced by Black mixed-race males and has offered broad insights for intervention, as well as highlighting the need for recognizing the uniqueness of mixedness. There are significant commonalities between Black males and Black mixed-race males; these include, the barriers faced, responses to those barriers, and potential interventions. Simultaneously, there are specific barriers facing Black mixed-race males due to their mixed identity. It will therefore be expedient for educators and policymakers to expand their understanding of the experiences of Black mixed-race males and pay greater attention to both the similarities and differences. Importantly, an emphasis on Blackness must not engender the

erasure of the particularities of mixedness. Simultaneously, an overemphasis on mixedness must not ignore the constitutive presence of Blackness in the lives of Black mixed-race males. Scholars and policymakers should build on the substantive work focusing on Black males, while continuing to highlight the uniqueness of mixed-race experiences. Where interventions are designed to raise the attainment of Black males, they should include recognition of mixedness.

Historical figures such as Malcolm X and Mary Seacole should be used to provide representation for the reconceptualized Black mixed-race pupil, and schools should allow for open discussions around these figures that allow pupils to explore their identities. Indeed, educators should be wary of the absolute ascription of identities upon pupils. This is of particular importance due to the heterogeneity of what it means to be Black mixed-race. Indeed, Black mixed-race pupils may identify in a whole host of different ways contextually and situationally, therefore, schools must facilitate and be aware of this. The work of Black communities and activist groups remains important and should endeavor to recognize and include the unique and specific aspects of what it means to be Black mixed-race.

There is still much work to be done when considering how schooling experiences for this group can be improved. While there is a need for further work on the role of the curriculum; there also needs to be work that considers the impact of school demographics; interpersonal relationships in schools; the role of teachers; peer group pressures and masculinities; and interactions between parents, communities, and schools. Additionally that work needs to consider how similar factors might impact upon Black mixed-race females. Finally work needs to look more closely at the coalescence of Blackness and mixedness for the Black mixed-race male, both inside and outside of schooling.

This article does not offer answers for all of these areas but hopes to make a small contribution to considering the complexity of how we understand the experiences of Black mixed-race males in the context of schooling. To summarize, a quote from participant Stephen:

In a lot of ways, we [Black and Black mixed-race males] face the same challenges you know? And we deal with them in the same ways in the same communities, so we need a great deal of solidarity to make change, but there are issues that affect mixed-race males specifically, and for true solidarity, we need to recognize these.

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